

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION**

Tuesday, 1 February 2005
POPE JOHN PAUL II

*To my Venerable Brother Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski
Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education*

1. I am pleased to offer my cordial greeting to you, to my venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood, as well as to all the members of the Dicastery who are meeting on the occasion of the Plenary Assembly. I wish you great success with your work in these days while you are examining certain questions that concern Seminaries, Ecclesiastical Faculties and Catholic Universities.

2. You are paying special attention to the educational project at Seminaries, which takes into account the fundamental complementarity of the four dimensions of formation: human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral (cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 43-59).

In light of current social and cultural changes, it can sometimes be useful for educators to avail themselves of the work of competent specialists to help seminarians acquire a deeper understanding of the requirements of the priesthood and to recognize celibacy as a gift of love for the Lord and for their brethren. At the time of the young men's admission to the seminary, their suitability for living a celibate life should be carefully assessed so that a moral certainty regarding their emotional and sexual maturity may be reached before they are ordained.

3. Your Plenary Meeting has also focused on the Ecclesiastical Faculties and Catholic Universities that constitute a rich patrimony for the Church. In the "great springtime for Christianity" that God is preparing (cf. Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 86), they must be distinguished by the quality of their teaching and research so as to take part officially in the dialogue with the other faculties and universities.

Given the rapid developments in science and technology in our time, these Institutions are called to a continuous renewal, to evaluate "the attainments of science and technology in the perspective of the totality of the human person" (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, n. 7). From this point of

view, interdisciplinary dialogue is undoubtedly useful. The comparison with "a philosophy of a genuinely metaphysical range" (*Fides et Ratio*, n. 83) and with theology itself is proving fruitful.

4. Another interesting subject you are addressing at your meeting is Christian education at scholastic institutions. Forty years ago, the conciliar Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis* outlined in this regard certain principles that the Congregation for Catholic Education was subsequently to develop further.

In the context of globalization and the changing mosaic of peoples and cultures, the Church is aware of the urgent need for the mandate to preach the Gospel and wishes to live it with renewed missionary dynamism. Catholic education thus appears more and more as the fruit of a mission that must be "shared" by priests, consecrated persons and lay faithful. The ecclesial service carried out by teachers of Catholic religion in schools fits into this horizon. Their teaching contributes to the students' integral development and to knowledge of others in mutual respect. Hence, there is a lively hope that the teaching of religion will be recognized everywhere and will play an appropriate role in the educational plan of scholastic institutions.

5. Lastly, I would like to mention the efficient vocations promotion carried out by the Pontifical Society for Priestly Vocations, established by my Predecessor, Pius XII. It sustains first of all the "World Day of Prayer for Vocations", an annual occasion that is the centre of vocational initiatives and events in all the Dioceses.

As I express deep gratitude to you for this praiseworthy institution, I willingly encourage those of you who dedicate time and energy to promoting a far-reaching vocations apostolate in the Ecclesial Communities. I think that the spiritual initiative it has embarked on in this year dedicated to the Eucharist is very timely. By arranging prayer shifts on each continent, it has created a chain of prayer that links Christian communities throughout the world.

6. In this regard, I would like to reaffirm that the Eucharist is the source and nourishment of every priestly and Religious vocation. I would like, therefore, to express my appreciation of every initiative in this "network" of prayer for vocations, which I hope will encircle the whole world. May Mary, "Woman of the Eucharist", watch over all who are devoting their energies to the pastoral care of vocations.

I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and to all your loved ones.

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